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Gregory, Jodi and Caldwell, Elizabeth F.

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Applying intercultural awareness to curriculum development in Art, Design and Architecture

Jodi Gregory & Elizabeth Caldwell
University of Huddersfield, UK

Introduction: A holistic model of the international student sojourn

A comprehensive literature review revealed four domains of the international student experience: Adjustment, Interaction, Achievement and Exit (Gregory, 2014). These domains have been used to create a holistic, conceptual model of the international student sojourn, which is intended to form the basis of discussion amongst staff and students and help raise intercultural awareness.

After a series of focus groups exploring discipline-specific issues for international students in a school of art, design and architecture, a workshop (inspired by the World Café, 2009) was designed using the holistic model of the student sojourn as a way of fostering collaboration between staff and students. This poster presents the key findings and outlines some implications for internationalisation of the curriculum.

Specific findings in the field of Art, Design and Architecture

"In our culture we have to learn the technical first but in this country we have to create it first" (Animation student from Vietnam)

"Hong Kong fashion students have a strong influence to be focused on haute couture and evening wear ... and they love powerful, hyperbole and meticulous style" (Fashion student from Hong Kong)

"I design the buildings but the lecturer says they are kind of like, 'International Style'... that was weird because I'm the one who designed but you're trying to, like, make your thinking into my building" (Architecture student from Malaysia)

"Some of them are doing better digital art than UK students" (Product design lecturer)

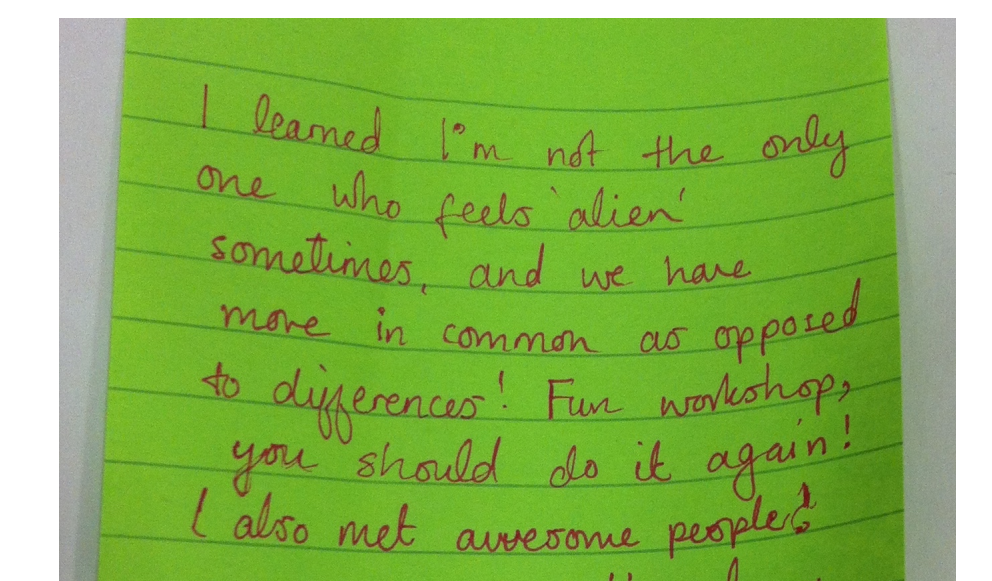
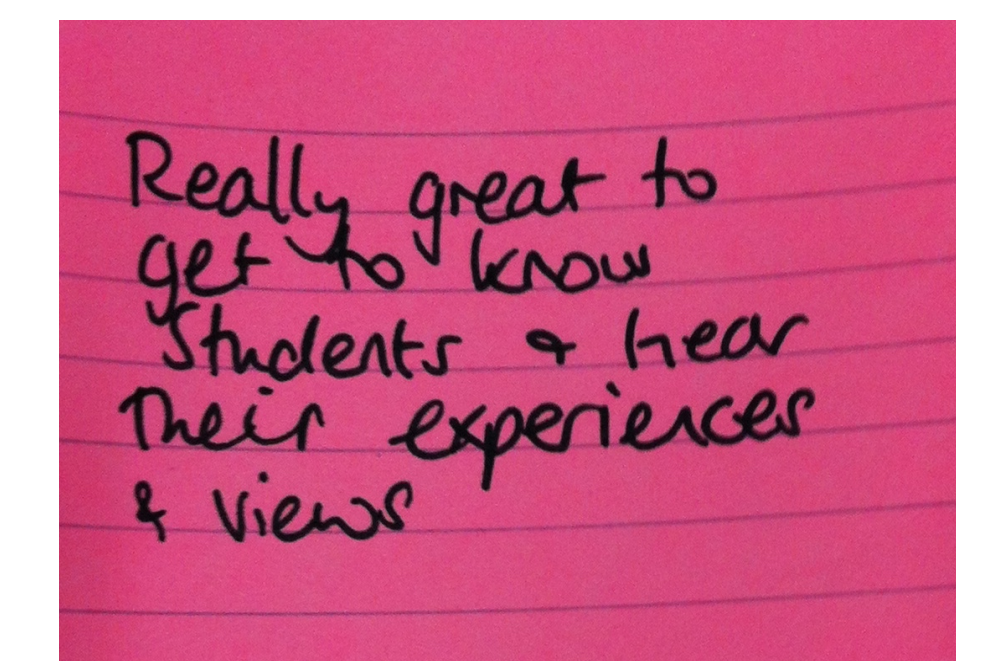
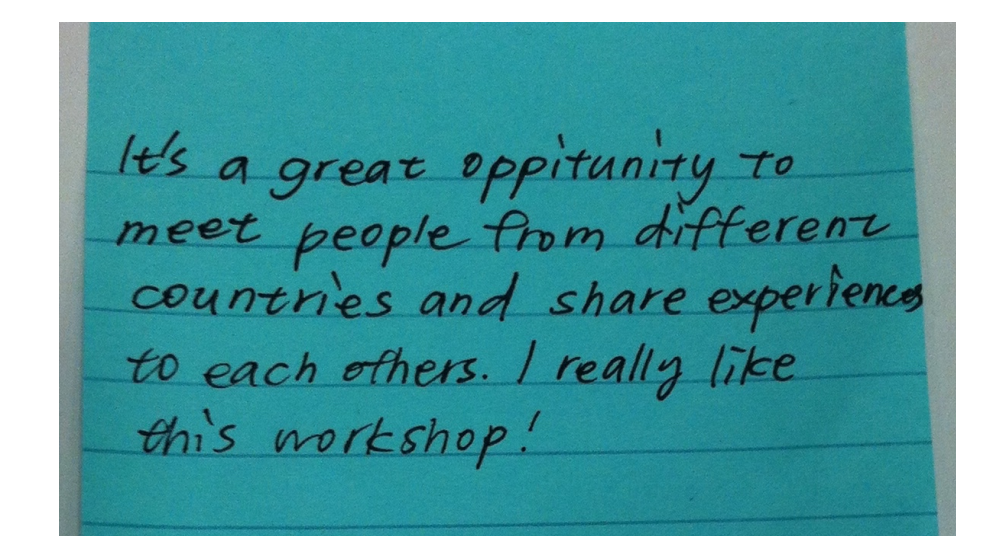
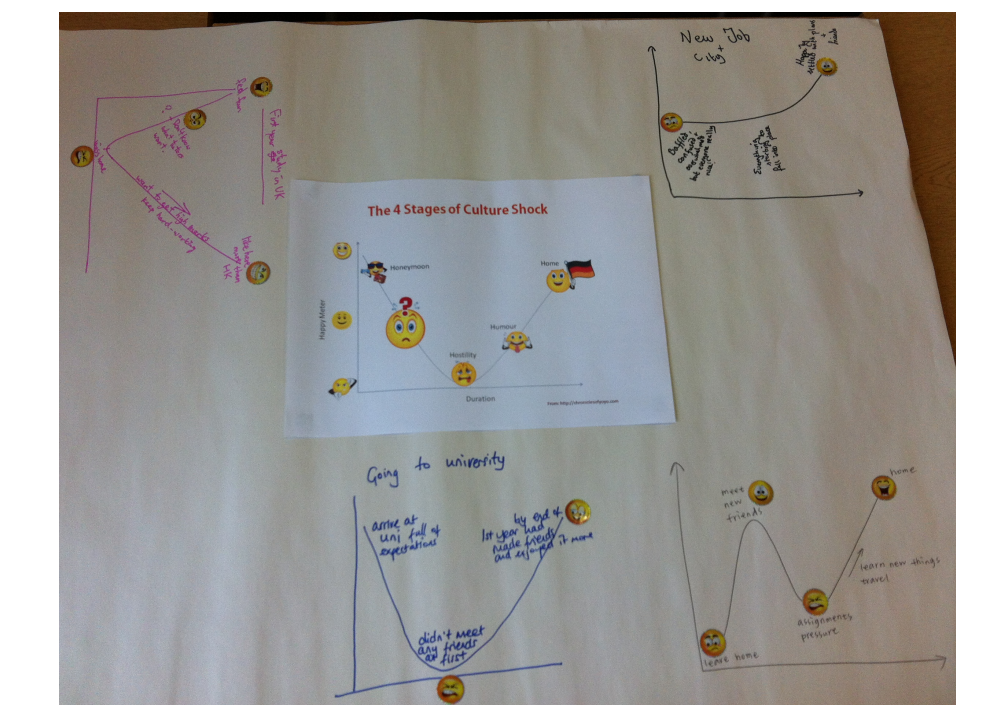
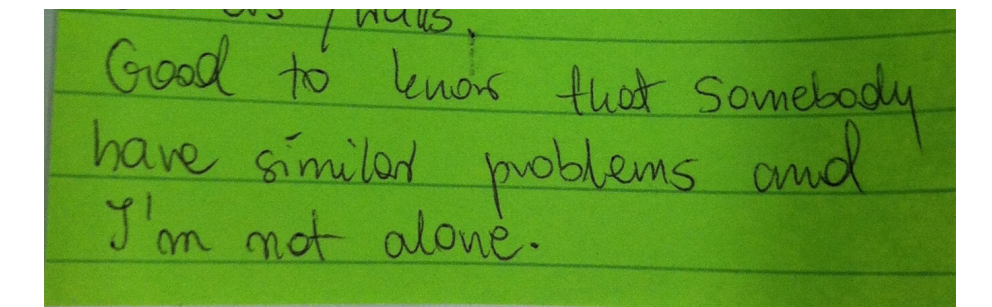
Implications for internationalising the curriculum in art, design & architecture

- Flexible nature of assignment briefs gives lots of scope for internationalisation
- Teaching cultural theory through using international examples gives opportunities to be inclusive and foster intercultural awareness
- The nature of the studio as a learning space breaks down barriers between staff and students. This helps international students adapt to the different learning environments in UKHE
- The interrogation of design decisions in the studio provides a good model for critical thinking

Conclusion

There are specific challenges in art design and architecture for international students, such as the culture-bound nature of aesthetics, the focus on the individual creative process and the lack of emphasis on technical skills. However, interaction in the studio provides an environment that supports all students in adapting and adjusting so that they value and appreciate the independence fostered by UKHE.

The workshop model can be adapted for use in any discipline, and is a helpful tool for fostering intercultural awareness and communication between staff and students, which in turn can help to inform curriculum decisions and encourage good practice.



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